AMERICA FACES THE WAR: A STUDY IN PUBLIC OPINION

By HADLEY CANTRIL

The author, social psychologist at Princeton University, is Director of the Princeton Public Opinion Research Project. Since the outbreak of war, the Project, under a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, has been charting the course of American opinion through the polling mechanism of the American Institute of Public Opinion. In this article, Dr. Cantril presents a cross-section picture of American opinion in connection with the war as of the end of July, traces opinion trends since the spring of 1939, describes the patterns of opinion which have been discovered and the characteristics of people holding these opinions, and offers some interpretations of public opinion as recorded to date.

WHEN war broke out in Europe early in September 1939, the overwhelming majority of the American people were confident that England and France would win. Only a tenth of the population forecast a Hitler victory. Almost half at that time thought the United States should declare war on Germany if she appeared to be defeating the Allies; while over 50 per cent believed the United States would sooner or later be drawn into the conflict. Only about a third of the nation felt it necessary to ask all able-bodied men 20 years old to serve in the army, navy, or air force for one year.

In the early summer more people conceded a German than an Allied victory. But by mid-summer, after Hitler's listen-to-reason-or-be-annihilated speech to England, 45 per cent forecast an English victory and only 24 per cent thought the Axis would win. The great majority at the present writing (August 1) believe England should continue to fight. Seventy-six per cent think this country should do more to help England, although no majority vote is registered for any concrete proposal to provide such aid. Two-thirds of the people see themselves affected if Germany wins the war, and a majority think Germany would start a war against the United States if she defeated England. To meet this threat, 75 per cent are willing to pay increased taxes to build up our national defense, while a majority believe the government should

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use a strong hand in controlling both industry and labor in the interests of national defense.

This is only a small part of a complicated story. For opinion does not uniformly rise or fall. On some questions it shows enormous flux, jumping up and down as one event follows another; on other questions it shows surprising stability. And by no means all people react the same way to news from Europe: some withdraw more into their shells of detached objectivity; others become more interventionist, foreseeing the consequences a German victory would have on their way of life. Throughout the war, opinions have been divided by basic undercurrents that give rise to what appear at first to be startling inconsistencies between the sympathies of the American people and their willingness to translate these sympathies into effective aid for the Allies.

In a study made possible by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Princeton Public Opinion Research Project is attempting to chart the course of American opinion throughout the conflict and to discover why opinion changes as it does at different times and among different population groups, what values some people feel are threatened, why certain individuals are afraid while others appear relatively indifferent, what basic frames of reference determine specific opinions toward the war, how the war is affecting attitudes toward our own social and political organization.

Information is obtained through the fact-finding facilities of the American Institute of Public Opinion. The Institute has generously allowed the Project to use its polling instrument to ask questions of representative samples of the national population, to duplicate all of its results and to pool its own information with the answers to questions sponsored by the Project.[1] The figures obtained are, in all probability, accurate within 3 or 4 per cent.

[1] The writer is greatly indebted to Dr. George Gallup for permission to use the Institute's facilities and to reproduce all of its data. Much information contained in this report is taken directly from the Institute. Messrs. Edward Benson, Lawrence Benson, Paul Perry, Donald Saunders and Miss Elizabeth Bissell of the Institute staff have all cooperated with the Project and given valuable advice. Lloyd Free is associate director of the Project and his help has been indispensable throughout. Donald Rugg, research assistant on the Project, has worked indefatigably on the calculations and made fruitful suggestions.

The tabulating equipment used by the Project has been kindly loaned by the International Business Machines Corporation. The charts on pp. 396-9 were prepared by Mr. Emil Herlin of the *New York Times* staff.

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All interviews are dated so that the effect of sudden developments is not obscured by the time required to collect the answers. The statistical results are supplemented by the respondent's comments which interviewers are required to note on most of the questions.

By utilizing the polling technique it is possible for the first time to give a running account of the change of opinion in a democracy during a period of great social upheaval.[2] This report summarizes the results obtained up to July 20.* It includes: (1) the latest results obtained on both Institute and Project questions pertaining to the war; (2) trends of opinion since the spring of 1939; (3) the different patterns of opinion that have been discovered and the characteristics of people holding these opinions; and (4) some interpretations of public opinion as indicated in this survey to date.

LATEST RESULTS

The most recent measurements of opinion concerning the war, the aid this country should give England, and national defense policies are listed below to furnish a rough picture of contemporary American thought on these subjects. Because of expense, it is impossible to repeat all questions each week. The dates indicate the time the ballots were distributed and the opinion represented would therefore be the opinion current during the following week or ten days.[3] The questions are worded here exactly as they were asked the sample population.

* *Editor's note:* Final results of later ballots have been included in some of the tables and charts. These were inserted in the proof and it was therefore impossible for the author to incorporate them systematically in his article.

[2] No contention is made here that the polling device is alone sufficient to tell the story of opinion change. In the June issue of the PUBLIC OPINION QUARTERLY a number of technical limitations of the polling procedure were pointed out. The most serious shortcomings from the point of view of the present study are the inability to obtain detailed information regarding the respondent's background and personality, the necessity of using rough indices such as age and economic status as substitutes for a number of psychological variables, the simplicity with which questions have to be asked if they are to be understood, and the sacrifice of sharp and personal distinctions of opinion when answers are forced into relatively few categories. Ideally, the polling procedure should be supplemented by community studies and by detailed interviews repeated regularly on selected people. Such investigations would give us more insight into the variety of influences that impinge on people in their everyday life and the motivation behind opinion.

[3] In this report all "no opinion" or "don't know" percentages are included in the total of 100 per cent. This accounts for any discrepancies the reader may note between the figures given here and those reported in releases of the American Institute of Public Opinion which uses as its base of 100 per cent only those people who have opinions.

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Expectations and War Aims

Do you think the U.S. will go into the war in Europe or do you think we will stay out of the war? (July 20, 1940)	Go in	39%
	Stay out	48
	Undecided	13
Which side do you think will win the war—England or Germany and Italy? (July 20, 1940)	England	45%
	Germany and Italy	24
	Neither	4
	Undecided	27
Which side do you think will win the war if no other countries go into it—Germany and Italy or England? (July 20, 1940)	England	43%
	Germany and Italy	31
	Neither	3
	Undecided	23
If Germany and Italy should defeat England in the present war, do you think Germany and Italy would start a war against the U.S. in the next ten years? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	55%
	No	34
	No opin.	11
Suppose the United States does not go into the war, and Germany defeats England and France. Do you think you, personally, would be affected by this German victory? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	69%
	No	25
	No opin.	6

Which of these two statements do you think is closer to the truth? (May 29, 1940)

England and France are now fighting mainly to keep their power and wealth	30%
England and France are now fighting mainly to preserve democracy against the spread of dictatorship	35
Both	27
No opinion	8

Do you think Germany will try to get control of the South American countries? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	70%
	No	16
	Don't know	14

Foreign Policy: General

If the question of the United States going to war against Germany and Italy came up for a national vote within the next two or three weeks, would you vote to go into the war or stay out of the war? (July 3, 1940)	Go in	13%
	Stay out	79
	Don't know	8
If you were sure that Germany would attack the United States after England is defeated, would you favor our country declaring war on Germany right now? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	50%
	No	43
	No opin.	7

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Which of these two things do you think is more important for the United States to try to do? (July 20, 1940)

To keep out of war ourselves	59%
To help England win, even at the risk of getting into the war	37
No choice	4

At the present time, which of the following should the United States do about helping England? (July 20, 1940)

Do less than we are doing now	5%
Do no more or no less than we are doing now	14
Do everything possible to help England except go to war	73
Declare war on Germany and Italy and send our army and navy to Europe	3
No opinion	5

If Germany wins the war against England and becomes the strongest country in Europe, do you think the United States should try to get along with Germany, or do you think we should stop all trade and diplomatic relations with Germany? (July 20, 1940)

Try to get along	65%
Terminate relations	18
Qualified answer	8
Don't know	9

Do you think the United States should let Japan get control of China, or do you think that we should risk a war with Japan to keep the Japanese from controlling China? (July 20, 1940)

Let Japan control China	47%
Risk war if necessary	12
Other	15
No opinion	26

Which Presidential candidate do you think would handle our country's foreign affairs better—Roosevelt or Willkie? (July 20, 1940)

Roosevelt	55%
Willkie	27
Undecided	18

Which do you think is more important to you personally—that England win the war against Germany and Italy or that (respondent's choice) be elected President of the United States this year? (July 20, 1940)

That England defeat Germany and Italy	50%
That respondent's choice be elected President	40
Undecided	10

Foreign Policy: Specific

Should the United States delay enlarging our own air force in order to send England and France right now all the airplanes we can make? (May 29, 1940)

Yes	35%
No	59
No opin.	6

The United States army and navy have about 5,000 airplanes. Would you approve of selling all, some, or none of these planes to England and France at this time? (May 29, 1940)

All	9%
Some	38
None	49
No opin.	4

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The Johnson act prevents any country which has stopped paying interest on its debt of the last World War from borrowing money in the United States. Would you approve of changing the law so that England and France could borrow money from our government? (May 29, 1940)	Yes	32%
	No	60
	No opin.	8
If during the next year England and France are unable to pay cash for materials bought in this country, should we sell them goods on credit? (April 17, 1940)	Yes	31%
	No	61
	No opin.	8
If the Allies need more money for running the war, would you be in favor of the United States and other American republics buying the British, French and Dutch possessions in the area of the Panama Canal? [Map is shown to respondents indicating location and extent of these possessions.] (May 29, 1940)	Yes	75%
	No	15
	No opin.	10
The Neutrality Law prevents American ships from traveling in the war zone in Europe. Should this law be changed so that American ships can carry war supplies to England and France? (June 29, 1940)	Yes	18%
	No	74
	No opin.	8
Should our government allow Americans to volunteer to fight in the British and French armies? (June 29, 1940)	Yes	52%
	No	39
	No opin.	9
If it appears certain that England will be defeated by Germany and Italy unless the United States supplies her with more food and war materials, would you be in favor of this country giving more help to England? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	85%
	No	12
	No opin.	3
In order to help England— Should the Neutrality Law be changed so that American ships can carry war supplies to England? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	36%
	No	54
	Don't know	10
Should the law be changed so that England could borrow money from our government to buy more food and war materials in this country? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	43%
	No	47
	Don't know	10
Should the United States send more airplanes to England even though this might delay our own national defense program? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	49%
	No	44
	Don't know	7

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Suppose it becomes clear that Germany is getting control of South American countries— Do you think the United States should do anything at all about it? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	80%
	No	10
	Don't know	10
Should the United States spend several hundred million dollars a year for South American beef, wheat and other farm products so that Germany would not get control of South American trade? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	49%
	No	22
	Qualified answer	13
	Don't know	16
If it becomes clear that Germany is getting control in South America, should the United States send its army and navy there to keep Germany from getting control? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	67%
	No	22
	Don't know	11

National Defense

Who do you think would do the better job of strengthening our country's defenses, Roosevelt or Willkie? (July 3, 1940)	Roosevelt	48%
	Willkie	28
	No diff.	13
	No opin.	11
Do you think our country's army, navy, and air forces are strong enough so that the United States is safe today from attack by any foreign powers? (May 16, 1940)	Yes	13%
	No	77
	No opin.	10
Do you think every able-bodied young man twenty years old should be made to serve in the army or navy for one year? (June 25, 1940)	Yes	59%
	No	35
	No opin.	6
The United States wants to increase the strength of its regular army to 400,000 men. If enough men do not volunteer would you favor drafting men until this figure is reached? (June 11, 1940)	Yes	67%
	No	25
	No opin.	8
Should the United States do any of the following at this time:		
Increase our army further, even if it means more taxes? (May 14, 1940)	Yes	88%
	No	9
	No opin.	3
Increase our navy further, even if it means more taxes? (May 14, 1940)	Yes	83%
	No	12
	No opin.	5
Increase our air forces further, even if it means more taxes? (May 14, 1940)	Yes	90%
	No	6
	No opin.	4

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Here are some measures which have been suggested to improve our national defense—

Should persons who oppose our present form of government be forbidden to express their opinions in public, or should they be free to express such opinions? (July 20, 1940)	Should be forbidden	38%
	Should be free	50
	Qualified answer	9
	Don't know	3
In connection with our national defense program do you favor increasing or decreasing government regulation and control of industry? (July 20, 1940)	Increase	54%
	Decrease	16
	No change	15
	Don't know	15
Do you favor increasing the size of our army and navy by drafting men between the ages of 18 and 32 to serve in the armed forces for one year? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	69%
	No	27
	Don't know	4
Would you be willing to pay considerably more taxes now in order to meet the cost of our national defense program? (July 20, 1940)	Yes	75%
	No	20
	Don't know	5
Should the government forbid strikes in industries manufacturing materials for our national defense program, or should the workers in these industries continue to have the right to strike? (July 20, 1940)	Forbid strikes	73%
	Have right to strike	20
	Don't know	7

As of approximately August first we have, then, in summary approximately the following picture: The people again see the hope of an English victory and believe that a powerful Germany would be dangerous to their own and to their nation's interests. A very large majority want this country to do more to help England than it is now doing. But they regard it as much more important to keep out of war than to aid England, showing a reluctance to give any concrete assistance to England unless such assistance is obviously and immediately to the self-interest of the United States, costs nothing, or involves little likelihood of eventual participation in the war abroad. The overwhelming reaction is to build up our national defenses, even though this means more taxes.

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TRENDS OF OPINION

The still life picture of opinion just reported takes on more significance if it becomes part of the moving picture of opinion taken since the war began. The charts on the next four pages graphically show the changes of opinion through time, the sensitivity of opinion to events. They tell their own story.

PATTERNS OF OPINION

In addition to repeating questions from time to time for trend purposes, when it seemed particularly appropriate the Project has supplemented the questions asked by the Institute with other questions to discover the relationship between various opinions and to obtain additional information (such as educational status) about the respondents. In this way, it is possible to gain a somewhat better understanding of what lies behind the opinions expressed, to see the reasons for what may appear on the surface as inconsistencies and contradictions of opinion, when they are reported separately and only in terms of national percentages.

From analysis of the interrelationships of various opinions, it has become clear that the population tends, in July 1940, to cluster into three opinion-patterns.

THE "ISOLATIONIST" PATTERN

About one-quarter of the total population thinks that it is more important for the United States to keep out of war than to help England, and at the same time believes either that we should do less or at least no more to help England than we are now doing. Although most of these people believe that Germany will win the war, they tend to think a German victory would not disturb either their own lives or the security of this country. Still at least half of them want to take the precaution of training men for military duties. As Table 1 shows, these opinions reflect a great deal more complacency than those of people in the other two patterns. In general, the isolationists regard the war as almost entirely a European affair, as something outside their domain and as of no great concern, either actually or potentially, to their own interests.

When we look more closely at the people who compose this group, we find that it is made up in greater proportion of women

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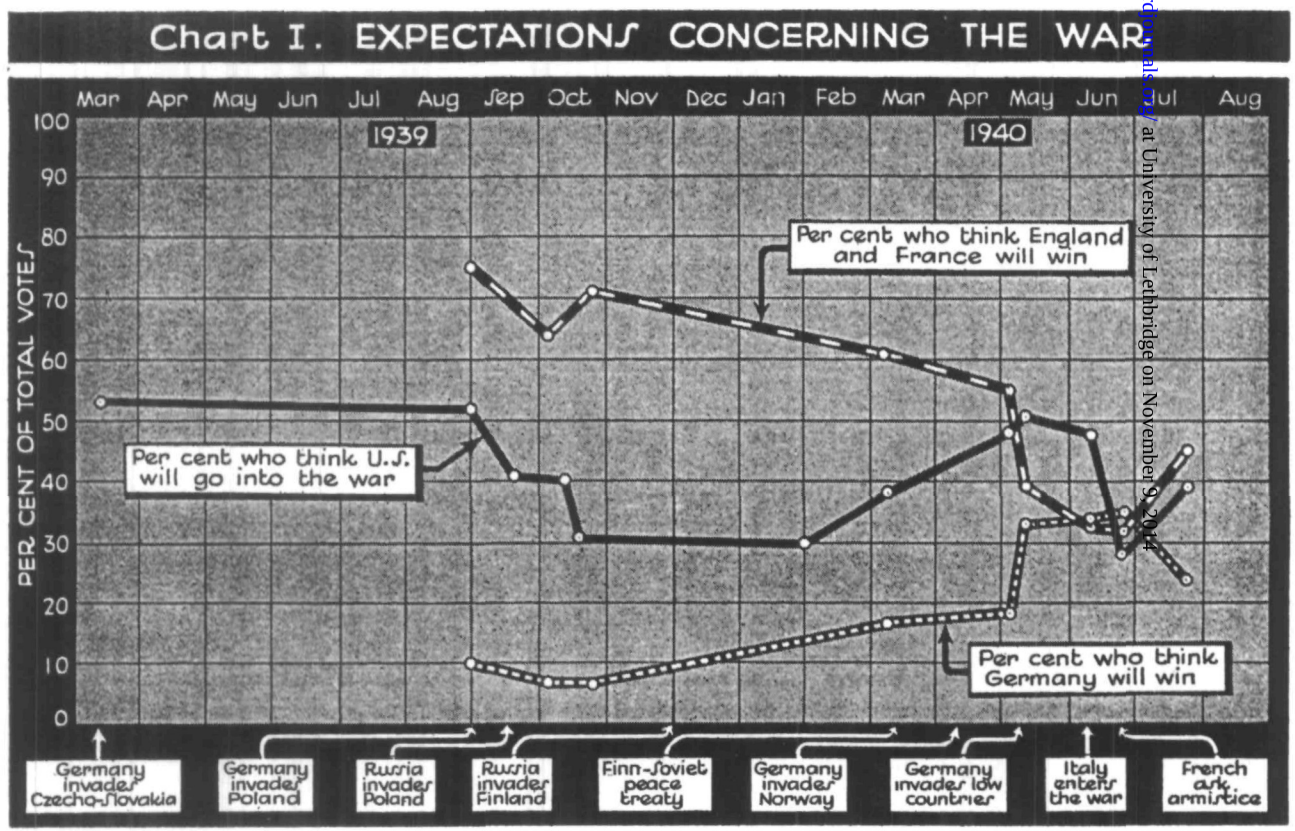

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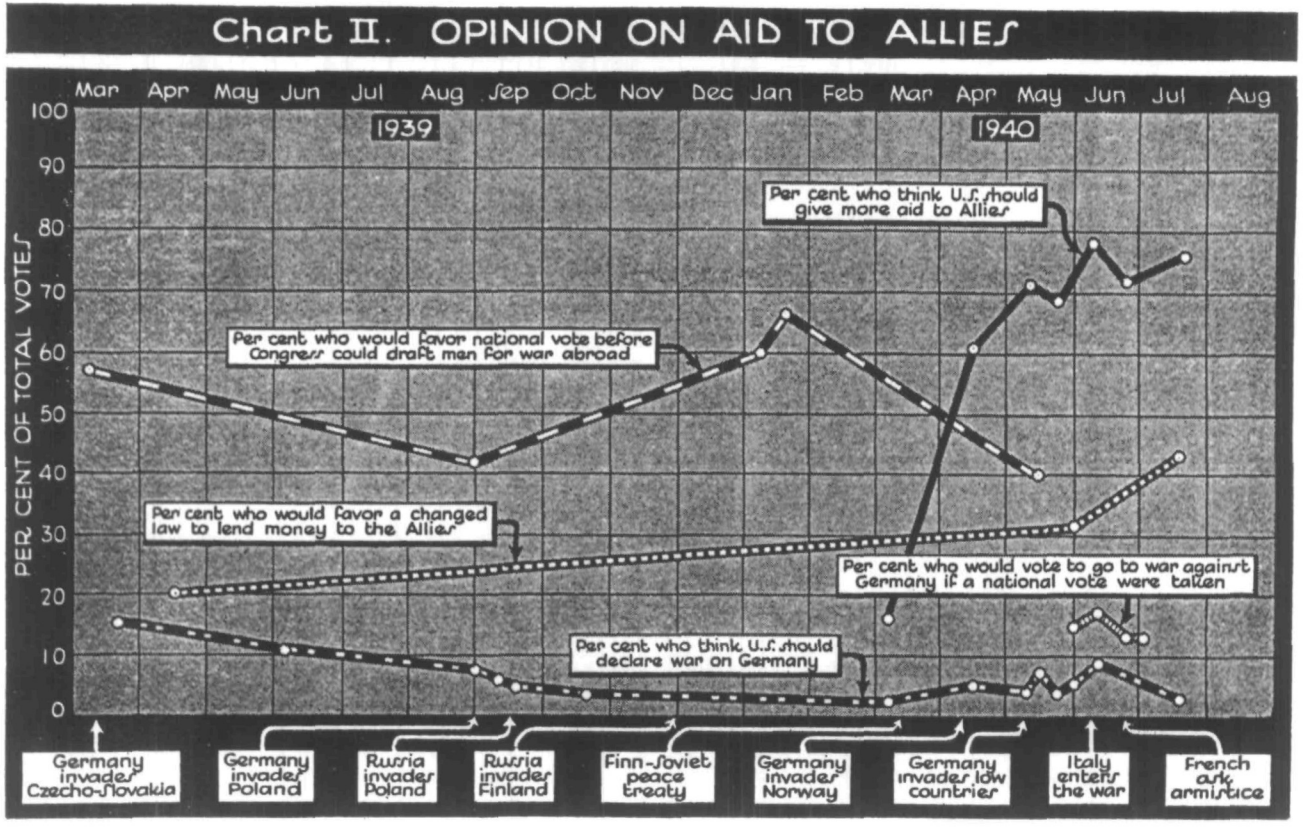
Chart II. OPINION ON AID TO ALLIES
Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug
1939
1940
PER CENT OF TOTAL VOTES
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Per cent who think U.S. should give more aid to Allies
Per cent who would favor national vote before Congress could draft men for war abroad
Per cent who would favor a changed law to lend money to the Allies
Per cent who would vote to go to war against Germany if a national vote were taken
Per cent who think U.S. should declare war on Germany
Germany invades Czecho-Slovakia
Germany invades Poland
Russia invades Poland
Russia invades Finland
Finn-Soviet peace treaty
Germany invades Norway
Germany invades low countries
Italy enters the war
French ark armistice

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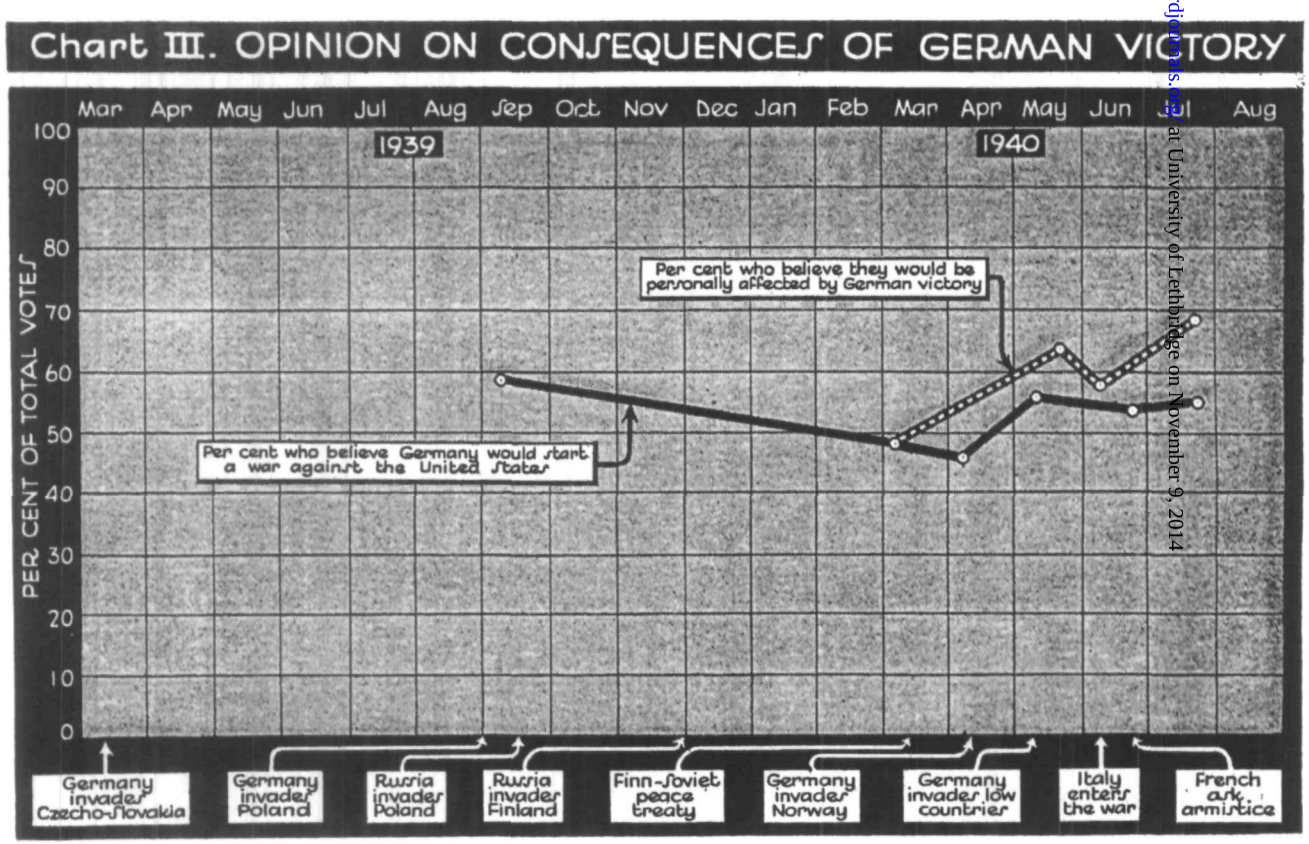
Chart III. OPINION ON CONSEQUENCES OF GERMAN VICTORY
Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug
1939
1940
PER CENT OF TOTAL VOTES
100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0
Per cent who believe they would be personally affected by German victory
Per cent who believe Germany would start a war against the United States
Germany invades Czecho-Slovakia
Germany invades Poland
Russia invades Poland
Russia invades Finland
Finn-Soviet peace treaty
Germany invades Norway
Germany invades low countries
Italy enters the war
French ask armistice

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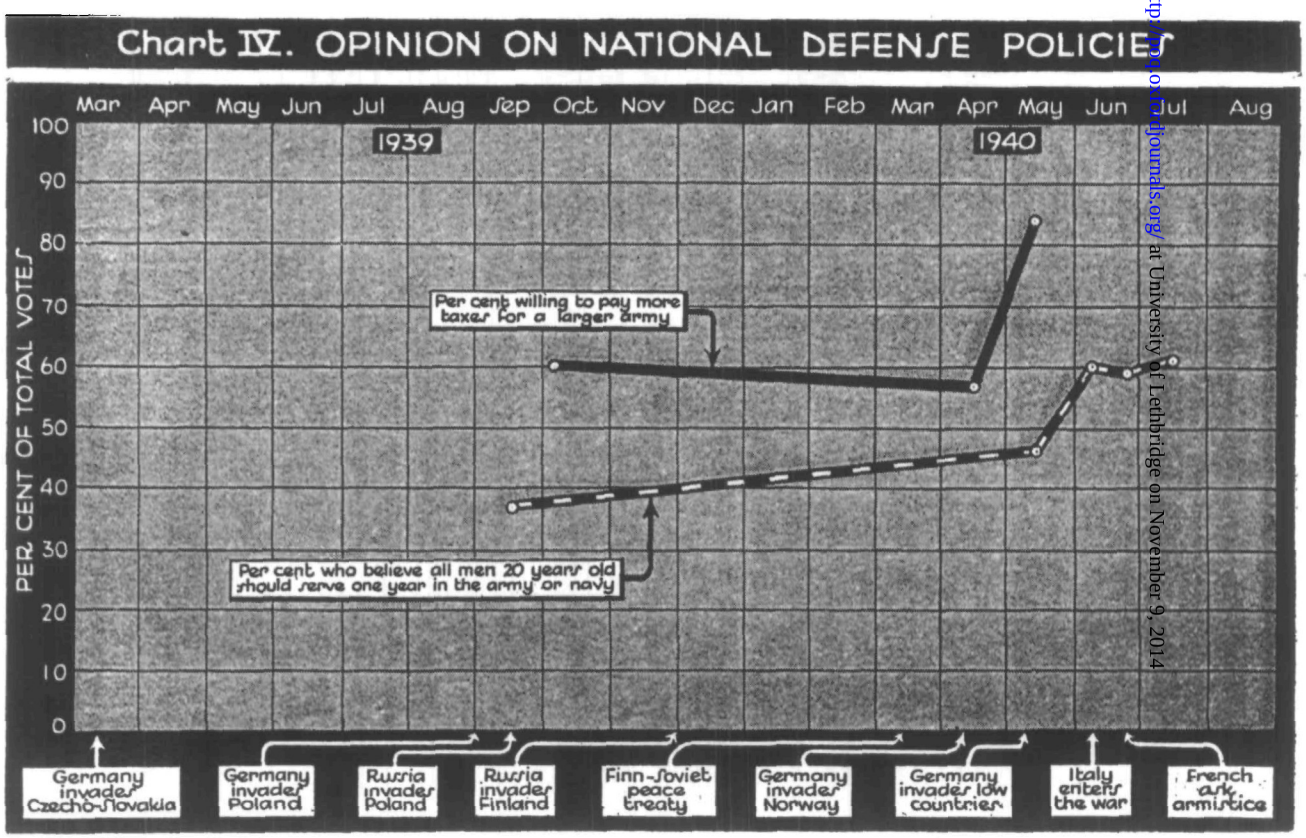
Chart IV. OPINION ON NATIONAL DEFENSE POLICIES
Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug
1939
1940
PER CENT OF TOTAL VOTES
100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0
Per cent willing to pay more taxes for a larger army
Per cent who believe all men 20 years old should serve one year in the army or navy
Germany invades Czecho-Slovakia
Germany invades Poland
Russia invades Poland
Russia invades Finland
Finn-Soviet peace treaty
Germany invades Norway
Germany invades low countries
Italy enters the war
French ask armistice

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than of men, of poor people than of the more well-to-do. In largest proportion of all are poor people over 50 years of age and young people of average or above average income (Table 2). We must have among the isolationists, then, a number of people who hold the same specific attitudes for quite different reasons. All of the attitudes undoubtedly spring from self-interest. But self-interest is a meaningless phrase unless given some content in terms of the values of the individuals concerned. What are the general attitudes held by these mixed groups of isolationists?

On all questions, women show more pacificistic attitudes than men, less willingness to help democracies already at war, less awareness that a German victory might affect their lives, less interest in increasing our own national defenses. They appear more indifferent, less realistic to the whole situation created by the war. People who are poor and old, feel less than any other group that they would be personally affected by a German victory. On almost all questions they give the highest "no opinion" response. They are the least educated group in the whole population and presumably would be least able to understand either the fundamental issues or the far-reaching implications of what is to them a very distant conflict. They have, furthermore, least to lose if Germany does win the war or if the social system which finds them at the bottom is radically altered.

The young people in the middle or upper income groups, on the other hand, show the lowest "no opinion" response on war questions. They are less expectant of a German attack on this country than any other group and also more than other people believe that the war is one for power and wealth rather than for democracy. On the whole, they think Germany will win. Their comments confirm their characteristic cynicism and reveal that these young people are well aware that they would have a good deal to lose by any active intervention. Not only would they have to fight on what they now regard as the losing side, but, unlike the less fortunate members of their generation, they would have to give up the relatively bright futures which loom ahead for them in a country that remains at peace.

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TABLE I

**Cluster of Opinions of the Isolationist, Sympathetic and Interventionist Groups*
(June-July 1940)**

Which of these two things do you think is more important for the U.S. to try to do?	*At the present time, which of the following should the U.S. do about helping England?*	*Believe Germany would start war on U.S.*	*Believe they would be personally affected by a German victory*	*Think U.S. will get into the war*	*Think England will win*	*Favor conscription of 20-year-old men for one year*
To keep out of war ourselves (61% of total)	Do less or no more than we are now doing (Isolationist: 23% of total)	26%	33%	22%	25%	51%
	Do more than we are now doing (Sympathetic: 38% of total)	40	66	25	49	60
To help England win, even at the risk of getting into war (35% of total)	Do more than we are now doing (Interventionist: 33% of total)	61	90	52	60	75

* About six per cent of the population cannot be classified in these patterns because they had no opinion.

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TABLE II

Proportions of Different Economic and Age Groups which Fall into the Isolationist, Sympathetic, and Interventionist Patterns (June-July 1940)

		Economic Status			
	Age	*Upper*	*Middle*	*Lower*	*Total*
Isolationist	Under 30	30%	28%	22%	26%
	30-49	21	23	26	24
	50 and over	17	23	34	26
	Total	21	23	28	
Sympathetic	Under 30	40	42	45	42
	30-49	38	38	35	37
	50 and over	39	40	40	40
	Total	38	40	39	
Interventionist	Under 30	30	30	33	32
	30-49	41	39	39	39
	50 and over	44	37	26	34
	Total	41	37	33	

THE "INTERVENTIONIST" PATTERN

In midsummer of 1940 the interventionist group contains a third of the total population. These people believe it is more important to help England, even at the risk of war, than it is for this country to keep out of war. They also think that we should do more than we are now doing to help England. Unlike the isolationists, they do not feel immune to the consequences of a Nazi victory, either as individuals or as members of a nation. Sixty per cent fear a German attack on this country, while 90 per cent foresee that their own lives would be affected if Germany won the war. Although a majority are still optimistic about an English victory, they seem to feel that such a victory will only be assured if this country joins the war on the side of England. Their general suspicion of Hitler's aims makes them highly in favor of conscription (Table 1).

The persons who hold this interventionist point of view appear on the whole to be a more homogeneous group than those who hold the other attitude-patterns. A greater proportion of men

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than of women, of upper than of lower income people are represented, while most characteristic of the pattern are people over 30 years of age in the upper and middle income groups. These individuals, representing the most highly educated segment of the population, are better able to take a long-time view, a fact indicated by their greater stability of opinion. They are more aware of the dislocations that would ensue in their own lives and in the present social system if Germany won the war. And since they are relatively well-established, successful and independent people in the present social system, they have more to lose than any others by the changes they believe Nazi tactics and ideology would bring about. Also, because of their favorable position, they would probably suffer least by the lower standards of living that would result if this country were geared to a war economy. In brief, there is little conflict here between self-interest and sympathy. And at least partially because of the sophistication of the self-interest of these people, they approve more than any others specific measures which would help England or build up our own national defenses.

THE "SYMPATHETIC" PATTERN

People in the "sympathetic" group agree with the isolationists that it is more important to keep out of war than to help England. But they agree with the interventionists that this country should do more to help England than it is now doing. Almost 40 per cent of the total population have this pattern of attitudes. In their fear of the consequences of a German victory, these people lie about mid-way between the isolationists and the interventionists. One characteristic of their attitudes is of special significance. About the same number of the sympathetic as of the isolationist group believe this country will get into the war in Europe. But twice as many of them feel that England will win the war. While the isolationists do not believe we should give any more assistance to a losing cause, the sympathetic group believe there is still hope for an English victory which can be brought about by the greater material help this country should provide England. The interventionists, it will be recalled, thought an English victory would require our military as well as material aid.

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The people who hold this pattern of opinions cannot be clearly differentiated by the indices available. Persons of various income and age levels, persons of both sexes and in all parts of the country are about equally represented. All of them are torn between their own self-interest and their sympathies. And so far, self-interest, as interpreted by them, has the upper hand.

This discussion of differences of opinion between certain elements of the population and of broad determinants that seem related to war attitudes must not obscure two other important findings. (1) In spite of the tendencies indicated for certain opinion-patterns to be characteristic of special groups, it would be quite false to assume that there is any clear-cut, unequivocal and consistent distinction between the opinions of members of one class and another, one age group and another, one sex and another. As Table 2 shows, in addition to the differences noted, people of every variety as classified by what information we have fall into all three of the opinion-patterns. The classifications possible on the basis of information about the respondents from poll data (sex, age, economic status, education, section of the country, political affiliation) separate people into groups that are numerically, but by no means always psychologically, distinct.[4]

The opinions with which we are dealing seem to derive from more personal influences than those so far obtained by the polling technique.[5] Individual interests and values, individual trainings and backgrounds, individual temperaments and capacities, together with many dimensions in the psychological worlds of different people, all play their rôle in determining the roots from which opinions toward the war finally stem. More revealing than the search for divisions of the population into rough statistical groupings by socio-economic indices are the inter-relationships of attitudes such as those contained in Table 1 which point to diversified frames of reference such as the cynicism, indifference, lack

[4] War attitudes appear to have no relationship whatsoever to political affiliation in either of the two major parties.

[5] As this study progresses and more information is acquired concering the determinants of opinion, it becomes possible to frame more penetrating questions that may tap some of these more personal influences. The Project sent out a special ballot on July 20, 1940 to get at some of the psychological characteristics of respondents which other ballots had pointed to. The analysis of these and other results will be published but was not available in time for inclusion in this report.

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of awareness, or pacificism of the isolationists, the particular brands of self-interest and the nature of the threats to existing values felt by the interventionists.

(2) Although New Englanders and Southerners are somewhat more interventionist than people in other parts of the country, attitudes toward the war seem, by and large, to cut across sectional as well as rural-urban lines. The impression gained is that the people in this country, as citizens within a given geographical area, are relatively homogeneous in their opinions. In addition to the ripening of national traditions, to the growing interdependence of domestic economy, to the common nature of certain problems faced by all Americans, local differences have been minimized by increased literacy, the expanding press and wire services and above all by the radio. Response to war news is therefore less determined by what, in former days, may have been highly conflicting or relatively incomplete dispatches in the more remote parts of the country or among people who find reading difficult.

INTERPRETATIONS OF PUBLIC OPINION

From the information obtained to date in this survey of public opinion in a democracy reacting to a war abroad, several characteristics of public opinion are tentatively suggested.

1. *By and large, public opinion does not anticipate emergencies; it only reacts to them.* We find, for example, that only *after* Norway was successfully invaded was there any noticeable increase in the desire of most Americans for a larger army, only *after* the successful invasion of the Low Countries were the majority of people sufficiently aroused to favor conscription even of a very limited nature. It was not until Hitler was astride most of Europe that people began to realize that a German victory would affect them personally.

2. *Public opinion does not remain intensely aroused for a long period of time unless the people feel actually involved in a conflict.* The fears of Germany as an enemy, the desire to help the Allies as well as concern about our own national defense wax and wane according to the sequence of military events. The desire to help England, the expectancy that this country will go

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into war mount either when a specific conflict abroad is imminent or when it is in process. After the particular battle is over, public opinion tends to relax. The intensity of feeling is dependent upon the degree to which opinion can first become crystallized around issues which are specific, easily understood, or concretely symbolized. Since the present war has involved many surprises, many motives by no means always clear to the layman, and has divided itself essentially into a series of separate military conflicts with different belligerents participating, it has been difficult to sustain identification with Germany's opponents and relatively difficult to conceptualize the issues of the war in simple, traditional terms.

3. *During critical situations, the government seems more remote and less personal to the people who constitute the public.* Individuals feel relatively helpless, caught by the inevitability of the events which they see transpiring and over which they appear to have no control. We find, for example, a huge discrepancy between the proportion of people who think this country will be drawn into the war and the proportion who actually think we should go to war. As far as the individual is concerned, his participation in the democratic process seems less real when the government has momentous, rapid decisions forced upon it.

4. *At critical times, people in a democracy are willing to assign more rather than less responsibility to their acknowledged leaders.* As issues become more complex and the imminence of events necessitates more rapid decision, people appear more willing to resign themselves to their elected representatives. For example, opinion favorable to a compulsory national referendum before American soldiers should be allowed to fight abroad was high before war actually broke out, dropped when the conflict began, and mounted again during the long calm of the winter. The majority believe the government should increase its control of both industry and labor where the progress of the national defense program might be impeded by more independence and freedom. A 10 per cent rise in President Roosevelt's popularity, during the crucial month of May 1940, probably also indicates a strong desire to let the leader assume the responsibility of decision.

5. *Public opinion, like individual opinion, is colored by desire.* What people want to happen, they tend to think will happen. In

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some segments of the population, as in some individuals, the effect of wish-fulfillment may be so strong that the people are completely blind to reality. This determination of opinion by desire is greatest where desire is most intense, most clearly identified with self-interest. We have pointed out, for example, that persons most anxious to do more to help England are those who think England will win. They are also the people who are most fearful of the consequences of a German victory.

6. *Although public opinion is by no means always consistent, many of the inconsistencies are more apparent than real when the basic frames of reference are discovered from which specific opinions derive.* Our analysis of the patterns of opinions has shown that, once the frames of reference of people are understood, the specific attitudes they hold are much more consistent than they would have appeared had we dealt only with the rough national returns on the different questions.

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